

NATIONAL CANNERS ASSOCIATION



Information Letter



FOR N. C. A. MEMBERS

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Directors to Meet on May 24

The semi-annual meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Washington office of the Association, the first day's session opening on Thursday, May 24. A number of unusually interesting and important subjects will be brought up for discussion, and there promises to be a good attendance. A resume of the proceedings of the meeting will be published in the Information Letter.

Standards Fixed for Hampers

The House on May 17 approved the Senate bill (S. 2148) fixing standards for hampers, round stave baskets, etc. As noted in last week's Information Letter, the House on May 7 passed its own bill (H. R. 8907) which provided that nothing in the bill should prohibit the use of five-eighths-bushel baskets by farmers or market gardeners, while the Senate bill included the five-eighths-bushel basket as a standard container. The House has now adopted the Senate bill.

Army Asks Bids

Bids on various supplies, including a number of canned foods, have been asked for by the Holabird Quartermaster Depot of the Army at Baltimore, Md., these bids to be opened May 29. Copies of the circular proposal, No. 398-28-34, may be obtained by addressing the Purchasing Contract Officer, Holabird Q. M. Depot, Baltimore, Md.

Truck Crop Markets

Increased shipments of cabbage, cantaloupes, cherries, cucumbers, lettuce, spinach, strawberries and tomatoes during the week ended May 12 were more than offset by lighter movement of other products, so that the total for 27 fruits and vegetables was only 17,350 cars. Prices were lower on nearly all strawberries except those in Louisiana and North Carolina. Florida tomatoes advanced in terminal markets, though shipments increased to 960 cars. Asparagus was priced more moderately. Green peas were active in California, Mississippi and the Carolinas, with movement starting in the Norfolk section. Shipments of beans from Louisiana were getting heavy, and additional southern sections were added to sources of supply. Florida shipping-point prices tended upward, as movement from that State dwindled.

CARLOT SHIPMENTS

	May 6-12 1928	April 29 to May 5 1928	May 8-14 1927	Total this season to May 12	Total last season to May 14	Total last season
Apples, total	372	549	548	91,031	131,882	133,849
Western	249	407	235	47,332	53,435	54,371
Eastern	123	142	313	43,699	78,447	79,478
Asparagus, total	193	257	133	2,380	1,692	2,145
California	65	91	44	1,493	854	1,059
Other	128	166	89	887	838	1,086
Cabbage, 1928 season....	1,038	916	418	11,269	11,838	38,853
Carrots, 1928 season....	135	219	(a)	2,758	(a)	8,516
Cherries, total	79	39	18	115	20	1,460
Cucumbers, total.....	295	152	473	911	2,348	8,195
Peas	231	264	313	1,811	1,846	4,192
Mixed vegetables:						
Domestic shipments..	853	995	867	15,261	15,329	35,070
Imports	9	14	51	373	246	299
Peppers:						
Domestic shipments..	71	82	57	1,575	961	2,817
Imports	26	15	6	726	981	1,004
Spinach	364	379	114	9,653	9,074	9,655
Strawberries	1,735	1,439	1,926	6,055	10,024	17,893
String beans	250	264	520	2,988	3,545	6,475
Sweet potatoes	149	170	204	22,438	23,988	25,764
Tomatoes:						
Domestic shipments..	976	826	1,177	5,444	8,642	32,521
Imports	117	168	60	3,990	4,696	4,862

(a) Unavailable

Fruit in Cold Storage

Cold storage holdings of fruit on May 1, as reported by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, were:

	May 1, 1928	May 1, 1927	5-yr. average
Apples	261,000 barrels	650,000	758,000
Apples	2,885,000 boxes	2,312,000	2,276,000
Apples	469,000 baskets	533,000
Pears	3,000 barrels	3,000
Pears	92,000 boxes	75,000

Truck Crop Prospects

Asparagus.—Asparagus production in the late states is estimated at 1,642,000 crates as compared with 1,662,000 in 1927. This forecast, combined with a revised estimate for the early

states, gives a total of 3,458,000 crates for 1928 as compared with 3,441,000 in 1927.

Cucumbers.—Production of cucumbers in five early states was estimated on May 12 by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics at 1,663,000 hampers, as compared with 2,040,000 hampers in 1927. Previous forecasts for California and Florida placed the production of these two states at 1,178,000 hampers, compared with 1,167,000 in 1927, making the total for these two states and five early states 2,841,000 hampers compared with 3,207,000 in 1927.

Peas.—In three intermediate states the production of green peas is estimated at 541,000 hampers, compared with 440,000 in 1927. This forecast, combined with a previous estimate for the second early states, gives a total of 2,612,000 hampers in 1928 as compared with 2,443,000 in 1927.

Snap Beans.—In five second early states the production of snap beans is now estimated at 1,193,000 hampers compared with 1,154,000 hampers in 1927. This forecast, combined with previous estimates for the early states, gives a total of 2,801,000 hampers in 1928 compared with 2,943,000 in 1927.

Strawberries.—Production in the early, second early, and intermediate states is now estimated at 298,567,000 quarts as compared with 242,093,000 quarts in 1927.

California Fruit Crop Prospects

Condition of apricots for the state as a whole on May 1 was 55 per cent, as compared with 60 per cent a year ago.

Cherries promise only a fair yield, as the May condition was 66 per cent. Should present condition be maintained throughout the season, however, the production will be about that of a year ago, when the crop was unusually light.

Prospects are favorable for a good crop of pears, the bearing acreage this season of all varieties being about 10 per cent above the bearing acreage of a year ago.

The outlook for prunes is fair, but not so favorable as a year ago. The bearing acreage is about 4 per cent above that of last year.

Peach prospects north of the Tehachapi, where about 90 per cent of the peaches are grown, were very good for all varieties on May 1; in Southern California prospects are very poor. There is a substantial increase in the bearing acreage of clingstone peaches compared with a year ago; acreage of freestone peaches shows very little change.

Weather and Crops

From the Ohio Valley southward, eastward, and northeastward, the week ended May 15 was generally cooler than normal, with the greatest minus departures of temperature appearing in the middle and south Atlantic areas, according to the weekly report of the U. S. Weather Bureau. It was likewise cool in central and southern Rocky Mountain districts, but elsewhere more than normal warmth prevailed.

Precipitation was substantial to excessive in much of the west Gulf area, and thence over most sections of the western Great Plains as far north as South Dakota. There were also some heavy local falls in the extreme lower Mississippi Valley, moderate amounts in parts of the Ohio Valley, and some rather large totals in the middle Atlantic area, as well as in central and southern Rocky Mountain districts. Elsewhere the amounts were scanty.

Except in some local areas the generally fair weather east of the Mississippi River made excellent condition for outside operations, but the continued coolness further retarded the germination and growth of vegetation, particularly warm-weather crops. In this area soil moisture is mostly sufficient, except that warm rains in substantial amounts are needed in most parts of the Ohio Valley and the central and western Lake region. West of the Mississippi River another splendid week for agricultural interests was experienced, especially in the west Gulf area, the central and southern Great Plains, and Rocky Mountain districts, where further generous rains and favorable temperature conditions prevailed.

New England.—Excellent for work; too cool for growth; season backward.

New York.—Warmer weather, but nights cold with frost on two nights. Fruit blooming rapidly.

New Jersey.—Heavy frost on a few mornings, with considerable scattered damage to strawberry bloom and tomatoes.

Pennsylvania.—Mostly fair weather except in extreme southeast; field work made good progress. Fruit mostly good condition; some damage by frost on 10th and 14th.

Maryland and Delaware.—Ground in excellent condition; planting unusually well advanced. Too cool for satisfactory growth of truck crops; peas beginning to bloom.

Virginia.—Unfavorable for farm work and for crop growth. Most farm crops backward.

Arkansas.—Very favorable for farm work. Corn progress very good, condition usually very good. Very favorable for truck and fruit.

Tennessee.—Soil conditions generally improved; over half of corn planted.

Kentucky.—Progress of corn planting fairly good; now too dry to insure germination.

Ohio.—Favorable for field work, but unfavorable for germination of seed and growth of vegetation. Good progress in preparing corn land, planting very slow. Fruit buds mostly safe.

Indiana.—Very favorable for operations, but growth of most vegetation retarded. Moisture and warmth needed. Corn planting made excellent progress, but germination poor on account of coolness. Slight damage by frost Saturday and Sunday to small fruits in bloom.

Illinois.—Light frost on 12th in north and some central areas. Showers in central beneficial, but rain and warmth needed in all areas. Corn planting well along.

Michigan.—Fair and mostly cool with freezing temperatures and heavy frost Saturday and Sunday. Weather favorable for field work; much too dry for crops. Fruit in heavy bloom and good condition except sweet cherries and peaches damaged by freezing in April.

Minnesota.—Favorable for outdoor work, but unfavorable for growth; corn planting well started.

Iowa.—Mostly warm and dry, although cold with some frost damage on 12th. Corn planting made excellent progress.

Missouri.—Moderate temperatures and ample sunshine favorable for farm work. Scanty rainfall unfavorable; all vegetation very backward. Corn planting practically completed.

Nebraska.—Very good progress in corn planting. Top soil condition excellent, but subsoil moisture reserve low.

Colorado.—Rains delayed farm work, but very beneficial to crops; fruits good.

Utah.—Good rains fairly general and greatly beneficial.

Washington.—Practically no rain; warm and sunshiny. Heavy drop of pears and peaches in some localities.

Oregon.—Week warm with few scattered showers in west. Pollination conditions favorable.

California.—Temperatures generally above normal. Deciduous fruits doing well. Early peaches and apricots ripening in some districts.

Business Conditions

Measured by the value of checks passing through the banks for payment, the dollar volume of business during the week ended May 12, although smaller than in the preceding week, was greater than a year ago, according to the weekly statement of the Department of Commerce. Wholesale prices were generally lower than in the preceding week, but averaged almost 8 per cent higher than a year ago.

Loans and discounts of Federal Reserve member banks receded from the previous week, but were higher than a year ago. Loans to brokers and dealers by Federal Reserve member banks

in New York City reached another new high point during the week. Interest rates on time money, showing no change from the previous week, were higher than last year, while rates on call money averaged higher than in either prior period.

CAR LOADINGS

	Total	Miscellaneous	Merchandise and L.C.L.	Other
Week ended May 5	979,662	396,996	263,961	318,704
Preceding week	961,928	384,646	259,196	318,086
Corresponding week, 1927	1,024,761	396,941	264,868	362,952
Corresponding week, 1926	986,216	318,086	265,776	402,354

Industrial Employment in April

Employment in manufacturing industries was 0.5 per cent lower in April than in March, and pay-roll totals were 1.4 per cent lower, according to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The trend of employment in April, as compared with March, has been downward in each of the last five years, but this decrease in 1928 is considerably less than in three of the four years preceding. Pay-roll totals as a rule show a greater drop in April than does employment owing to the custom of closing plants at Easter, which prevails in many localities.

Employment and pay-roll totals in April, 1928, were 5.4 per cent and 6.9 per cent lower, in the two items respectively, than in April, 1927.

The data for April, 1928, were based on returns made by 10,788 establishments in 54 of the chief manufacturing industries of the United States. These establishments in April had 3,005,964 employees.

Wholesale Prices in April

Wholesale commodity prices in April were about 1½ per cent higher than in March, and nearly 4 per cent higher than in April last year, according to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Farm products as a group advanced nearly 4 per cent above the March level, while food and building materials advanced about 1½ per cent.

Pending Legislation

Crop insurance.—The Senate on May 16 passed the bill (S. 2149) authorizing and directing the Secretary of Agriculture to investigate all phases of crop insurance, and appropriating \$50,000 for the purpose.

Farm relief.—The Conference report on the farm relief bill (S. 3555) has been approved by both the House and Senate.

Prison-made goods.—The House on May 15 passed the bill (H. R. 7729) introduced by Representative Cooper which would divest prison-made goods of their interstate character and make them subject to the laws of the state or territory into which they are transported and remain for sale. The House adopted an amendment to the bill as reported by the Committee which would make the act effective three years after the date of its approval. A similar bill (S. 1940) is pending in the Senate.

Chain Store Investigation Authorized

The Senate on May 12 passed the resolution (S. Res. 224) introduced by Senator Brookhart, directing the Federal Trade Commission to undertake an inquiry into the chain store system of marketing and distribution as conducted by manufacturing, wholesaling, retailing or other types of chain stores, this report to be submitted to the Senate. The resolution as adopted does not limit the time of the inquiry. The investigation is to cover:

- (1) The extent to which such consolidation has been effected in violation of the anti-trust law, if at all.
- (2) The extent to which consolidations or combinations of such organizations are susceptible to regulation under the Federal Trade Commission Act or the anti-trust law, if at all.
- (3) What legislation, if any, should be enacted to regulate and control chain store distribution.

Cuban Vegetable Industry

Production of vegetables in Cuba for export to the United States has been increasing rapidly during the past five or six years, according to a report received by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics from the American Consul at Habana. Vegetables exported to the United States in order of their importance are: Tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, eggplant, and lima beans. The remaining 15 per cent is made up of okra, squash (round white variety), cucumbers, onions, and string beans. Tomatoes alone constitute about 50 per cent of the value of the total exports.

A drought, extending from the end of November, 1927, to the end of March adversely affected the 1927-28 crop. Tomatoes were particularly hard hit. There are some indications that the plantings of vegetables for the 1928-29 season may be smaller, as the raising of coffee is again being taken up in some of the vegetable producing areas. However, as growers of vegetables discontinue this line there are always new planters to take their

place, and it is still too early to estimate the extent of the planting which will occur next autumn.

Exports during the 1926-27 season and the 1927-28 season to March 31, were as follows:

	Nov., 1926, to Oct., 1927 Pounds	Nov., 1927, to Mar., 1928 Pounds
Cucumbers	39,552	37,706
Eggplant	10,908,877	2,893,948
Lima beans	1,676,475	1,426,914
Okra	308,937	261,045
Peppers	13,965,277	2,131,097
Potatoes	3,467,501	4,337,176
Squash	230,449	265,402
Tomatoes	12,337,485	15,028,380
Others	396,199	668,245
Total	43,124,522	27,049,913

National Credit Survey to be Made

The nation-wide retail credit survey under the joint auspices of the Department of Commerce and the National Retail Credit Association will be started in Baltimore, it is reported, in which city questionnaires will be sent to retailers in the nature of a preliminary test. The results from this work, it is stated, will serve as a basis for the questionnaire to be sent out later all over the country.

The principal questions asked are based on three major subjects—Cash transactions; open credit; and deferred or installment payments. Other questions relate to monthly balance, collections, bad debts, and the detailed administration of credits.

National Conference on Weights and Measures

Work of state and federal agencies that provides protection for the public against inaccurate weights and measures and methods for improving this service will be discussed at the Twenty-first National Conference on Weights and Measures to be held in Washington May 22 to 25, under the auspices of the Bureau of Standards, Department of Commerce.

Foreign Trade Notes

Production of canned fruits and vegetables in British Columbia in 1927 is estimated by local canners at 800,000 cases, as compared with 836,000 in 1926 and 753,000 in 1925. The decrease was apparently due to the short peach and plum crops, and the unfavorable conditions attending the tomato harvest, according to a report received by the Foodstuffs Division of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.

Exports of crushed, preserved, and concentrated pineapple from Costa Rica during the first quarter of 1928 totaled 208,470

pounds, compared with 80,777 pounds during the corresponding period in 1927. The increase was not due to a greater production but to the fact that the entire quarter's production and stocks on hand were exported.

An Editorial on Ptomaine Poisoning

So long as physicians continue to make diagnoses of ptomaine poisoning it can hardly be expected that the public will give up the use of this scientific-sounding phrase to describe what may easily be just plain bellyache. Nor will newspapers forego reporting illnesses as an "acute attack of ptomaine poisoning," or perhaps "a touch of ptomaines."

For this reason it is gratifying to find the Journal of the American Medical Association speaking plainly and forcefully in its issue of May 12, on the use of this "nondescript expression," which, it asserts, "should be entirely abandoned." The editorial is reproduced in its entirety, because it will give canners an authoritative opinion from the medical profession's leading journal.

PTOMAINES POISONING—WHAT IS IT?

The statistics for the occurrence of food poisoning in this country are sufficiently formidable to merit careful scrutiny by all concerned with the public health. There are, indeed, several states in which food poisoning is a reportable disease, implying that the disorder is a clearly recognized disease entity. Among a large number of alleged outbreaks that have been specially studied for "The Journal," the diagnosis of "ptomaine poisoning" was assigned to about one-third of the cases involved. This has long been an expression to conjure with in medicine as well as in the writings and conversations of the layman. According to the investigation reported, a careful scrutiny of the case histories as well as of the results of such necropsies as are available has indicated the widespread errors of diagnosis that have arisen under the guise of a rather meaningless designation. It seems high time, therefore, that the efforts at reform should be more vigorously prosecuted in the immediate future.

A ptomaine has been defined as a basic organic compound that is formed by the action of bacteria on nitrogenous matter. It thus is a chemical entity just as the vegetable bases known as alkaloids are. However, the term ptomaine includes a wide variety of compounds, some of which are not particularly toxic and none of which are specific in the sense that bacterial toxins are. Hence we are reminded by Rosenau that bacteria which are in no sense pathogenic may be capable of producing ptomaines, while others which are highly pathogenic may produce few or none of these basic derivatives. The outcome of present-day consideration is that most of the cases of so-called ptomaine poisoning that cannot be attributed to quite independent clearly-defined etiologic factors are recognized as infec-

tions with certain bacteria, such as those of the paratyphoid group or as intoxications with bacterial toxins such as those of the botulinus organism.

As "The Journal" has pointed out, a clinical diagnosis of food poisoning, especially when it is suspected that the food is contaminated with certain bacteria of their toxins, should be supported by epidemiologic, bacteriologic and toxicologic investigation. The nondescript expression ptomaine poisoning should be entirely abandoned. For the most part it is a misnomer; and, as Jordan has stated, it is used to decide an etiologic uncertainty. Illness due to food may arise from bacterial infection of the food, from toxins retained in it, or from a large variety of organic and inorganic contaminants. Infected food is far more harmful than decomposed food, as a rule. Food is at most a vector of harm which may range from a microbe causing enteritis to the poison of a toxic mushroom or the accidental presence of a noxious element like arsenic or mercury. In any event there is no proper place in any of these diverse categories for the expression "ptomaine poisoning." The haphazard diagnosticians will miss the self-satisfying euphony of these words, and the public may regret the passing of the verbal symbol of the mystery of upset "inner workings" of mankind. Nevertheless the plea for the abandonment of an admittedly inconclusive designation of disease must win.

Publications of Interest to Canners

Asparagus industry.—A comprehensive illustrated bulletin of 104 pages on the asparagus industry in California has been issued by the California Agricultural Experiment Station at Berkeley. Among the subjects discussed in this bulletin are seed characters and storage conditions favoring germination; sex expression; root system and the way the plant grows; factors influencing size of spears; differences in plant characters and yield of staminate and pistillate plants; crown selection on a sex basis; fertilizing; growing and handling of crowns and nursery management; establishment of asparagus plantations; management of asparagus plantations in France and eastern United States, the Imperial Valley and the California Delta regions; factors influencing yield; breeding and improvement problems; cutting, hauling, packing, trimming, crating, bunching and shipping. In addition, the bulletin contains a chapter on the asparagus canning industry in California and descriptions of insect pests and fungus diseases, with recommendations for control.

Blackleg disease.—Experiments conducted between 1922 and 1927 with the object of developing practical and effective control measures for blackleg disease of brussels sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower are described in bulletin 550 of the Geneva, N. Y., Experiment Station. The following control measures have been tried out on a large scale with satisfactory results:

1. Rotation of seedbed and field areas, selecting land for the seedbed that has grown none of the susceptible crops for the previous five or six years, and land for the field that has grown other crops the previous three years.

2. Seed treatment, soaking all cabbage and brussels sprouts seed in water at 122° F. for 25 minutes. All cauliflower seed should be soaked 18 minutes, not to destroy blackleg because it is not carried on cauliflower seed, but to destroy black-rot which may be present on the seed.

Cabbage Maggot.—Circular No. 76 of the Geneva, N. Y., Experiment Station, states that the cabbage maggot can be effectively controlled either by growing the young cabbage plants under a cheesecloth screen or by applying corrosive sublimate about the base of the young plants. Heavy applications of tobacco dust will also check the maggot, but the treatment is probably too costly for practical use.

Corn borer.—The U. S. Department of Agriculture has just issued technical bulletin 59-T, "The European Corn Borer and its Controlling Factors in Europe," by W. R. Thompson and H. L. Parker, entomologists of the Department, who have spent most of the past six years in France, Spain and Italy studying the corn borer. The authors explain that in parts of Europe the corn borer seems to have reached a state of something like equilibrium of numbers with the balance struck between normal reproduction capacity as opposed by the natural and artificial factors that limit the multiplication of the insect. They say there is no reason to expect any such state of balance in the United States for at least 20 years, and in the meantime corn growers here must expect to learn to live with the corn borer as it exists and to make any adjustments that are necessary in getting control of the insect.

New or noteworthy fruits.—Thirteen new or noteworthy fruits are described and recommended in bulletin No. 551 of the Geneva, N. Y., Experiment Station. These include Beauty, Formosa, and Stanley plums; Early Elberta and Mikado peaches; Sure Crop, nectarine; Fredonia and Golden Muscat grapes; Latham and Lloyd George raspberries; Mastodon strawberries; Adams elderberries; and Fredonia gooseberries. Four of these varieties were developed at the Geneva Station, while nine others came from other sources.

Paper Mulch.—Paper of the type used as a mulch in pineapple production in Hawaii has been found to be applicable also to a wide variety of crop plants in the eastern United States, ac-

cording to results of experimental work by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, presented in technical bulletin 75-T, "Crop-Plant Stimulation with Paper Mulch." Various mulching papers are being studied by the department at the Arlington Experiment Farm and elsewhere to find a cheaper paper that will be satisfactory under varied soil and seasonal conditions.

Peach cottony scale.—Experiments made to ascertain the tolerance of peach foliage to spray applications of the more promising insecticides and to determine the efficiency of these materials when used during the summer months in combatting the peach cottony scale are described in bulletin No. 552 of the Geneva, N. Y., Experiment Station. Emulsions containing highly refined oils were found more effective than any of the other materials safe to use on peach foliage.

Vegetable seed treatment.—In bulletin No. 554 of the Geneva, N. Y., Experiment Station are given the results of treatment of supposedly healthy vegetable seeds with organic mercury preparations. Observations were made both in the field and greenhouse of the effect on stand, and in the case of peas, string beans and corn observations were also made of the effect on yield. Increased yields obtained from treated seed were somewhat greater than would be expected from the gain in stand. As a result of the experiments it is concluded that vegetable growers might profitably treat seed that is to be sown early, while with mid-summer sowings there is less need for this protection.

Appreciation from Abroad

The Society of Public Analysts of Great Britain is analogous to the Bureau of Chemistry of this country in that the examinations of all foods and beverages in connection with the enforcement of the food laws are made by members of this organization. The retiring president, Mr. E. R. Bolton, in his annual address which appeared in the April issue of "The Analyst," stressed the necessity of the study of uniform methods of analysis. He cited the valuable research of various organizations in England and said further:

"We have good examples to follow in other countries. I might, in particular, refer to the United States of America, where there are such organizations as the National Canners Association, which pursues the scientific problems of that particular trade in every necessary direction."